



State Representative
Gigi Talcott

News & Views:

2000 Session Report

Representing Fircrest, University Place, Lakewood, Steilacoom,
Tillicum, W. Tacoma, and Anderson, Ketron & McNeil Islands

"Controlling Taxes and Making Government Work!"

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

On Saturday, January 8th, I held my 65th "town hall" at the Lakewood Library. For over three hours, Mike Carrell and I listened to personal experiences and discussed dozens of issues that are important in Anderson Island, Fircrest, Lakewood, Steilacoom, University Place and west Tacoma. I cherish these up-close, personal times to tackle tough issues together.

I also hope you will make the time to join us again on **Saturday, February 19th, for a "mid-session town hall" at the University Place Library from 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.** By then, we'll be more than half of the way through this year's 60-day legislative session and there will be much to talk about! And hearing from you certainly helps me when we debate the issues in the House.

Because of the short, 60-day session this year, the usual election year politics, the unusual 49-to-49 "tie" in the House, and the passage of Initiative 695, the challenges and opportunities we face are greater than ever. We absolutely must come together to solve the problems in public safety, education, transportation, health care and social services!

Until the 2000 session is over, please don't try to catch me at home — I probably won't be there! I will get your messages quickest when you call our toll-free hotline, 1-800-562-6000. I value your advice.

Sincerely,

Gigi Talcott
Your state representative

Rep. Gigi Talcott

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Representative Gigi Talcott



EDUCATION: AGENDA FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

A Commitment to Success

Back in January, many of you joined me and Rep. Mike Carrell, at the Lakewood Library to talk about what you wanted to change in our state government. We discussed taxes and what opportunities come with the passage of Initiative 695. And, of course, we talked about education. As a lifelong teacher, I love helping students.

Based on the reaction to my education proposals for the 2000 legislative session ("**Let children learn, let teachers teach, let parents choose**"), it looks like we're moving in the right direction. My goals are simple:

1. Students should feel safe from the threat of violence and harassment in their own schools.
2. Teachers must be granted relief from state and federal red tape so that they may focus their attention on students in the classroom.
3. Parents should have a choice where their children are surrounded by success.

Key Education Legislation

Students succeed when schools are safe!

We are fortunate to have a leader of national importance on school violence issues right in our own community. Jesus Villanova, of the Pierce County Sheriff's Office, has trained many schools on how to effectively confront the crises which every parent, teacher and student fears most.

However, Mr. Villanova will also tell you that being prepared to deal with incidents of violence is only half the battle. We need to address the root of the problem by asking ourselves why some students have become so violent.

Students succeed where character counts!

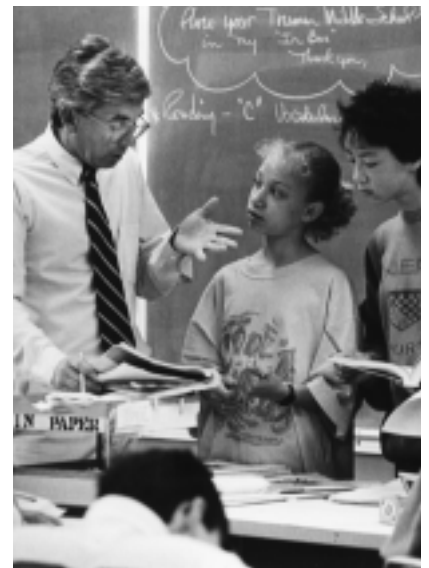
Across the nation, the results of character education programs have been very encouraging. From coast to coast, schools with peer character education programs, counseling and guidance have noted significant drops in instances of violence, bullying and harassment.

My goal is to provide local school districts with the tools and resources necessary to implement locally-designed character education programs — and to do this without creating new mandates.

Successful students have successful teachers!

Already, 43 other states have instituted teacher testing programs, but Washington has fallen behind. In addition to higher teacher standards, we will also look to develop a Master Teacher pilot program that provides Washington's most successful teachers with the opportunity for career advancement by becoming

mentors for new teachers and those in low-performing schools. When the only career advancement opportunities for our best teachers removes them from the classroom and puts them in an office, we need to rethink our policies.



Successful students are tomorrow's leaders!

Similarly, we will look to expand Washington's certification of specialists program. Our state is blessed with incredible talent in the math, science and high-tech fields, which we need to bring to our classrooms.

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INITIATIVE 695 UPDATE

Controlling Taxes...

I've heard from voters who opposed Initiative 695, and from those who supported it. The one constant, however, is that we all want our tax dollars used more effectively. Here are some of the reforms I support that will help make this measure work the way citizens hoped it would.

- 1) **Performance-based budgeting** — Historically, the budget process begins with the assumption that all current programs will be funded without justifying whether they are needed or measuring their effectiveness. Performance- or zero-based budgeting means starting from scratch, re-evaluating existing programs, eliminating outdated or duplicated services, and ensuring that government is doing a good job at providing basic needs for citizens.
- 2) **Cutting waste** — There is a big difference between demanding that government cut costs and demanding that it cut services. A recent state-sponsored audit of the Department of Transportation found that cost overruns on transportation projects average about 10 percent. By comparison, the average in Oregon is a mere 3 percent. This session, we will pay close attention to doing a better job of managing taxpayer dollars.
- 3) **Eliminating unnecessary and costly local mandates** — In addition to restoring some of the funding local government lost for public safety and other essential needs, we believe we can help achieve efficiency at every level of government by removing many costly mandates which the state has imposed on cities and counties.

Making Government Work...

Keep Washington's Roads Safe and Open!

With over 70% of the I-695 cuts in transportation, we can't wait to make long overdue improvements. Clogged roads and highways not only detract from our quality of life, but also threaten our strong economy.

I am committed to funding improvements to our state's transportation system, even in light of I-695. To do so will require a change in the way we've funded previous transportation projects. For example, we believe local transit organizations, like any other area of government, merit a re-ordering of priorities. Local bus and shuttle systems should be held accountable for every dime they receive from the state, just as the state must be held responsible for its spending.



Safe neighborhoods and communities!

One area we will not shortchange this session is **public safety**. Funding local police and fire safety programs affected by I-695 is essential. Keeping people safe in their local neighborhoods and communities is a responsibility of government.

There will be other public safety issues we review this year, including our continued commitment to combat juvenile crime, violent and repeat adult criminals (including sex offenders) and crimes that involve weapons.



Representative Gigi Talcott



HEALTH CARE: AFFORDABLE ACCESS IN ACTION!

Bringing Choice to All Washingtonians!

For those of you who purchase your own health insurance, I'm sure you already know about the health care crisis in Washington state. In 32 of our 39 counties, individuals and families who purchase their own insurance do not have access to private health care insurance. Health care costs continue to rise and consumer choices have become severely limited as most every private insurance carrier has pulled out of the individual market in our state. It is critical that the Legislature address real reform.

Patients Bill of Rights

When it comes to something as important and personal as your own health care, government should have no business telling you which doctor to use, nor should it make the decision of whether you get an operation or prescription drugs. Neither should private health insurance carriers. Instead, these decisions should be left between you and your doctor. This is just one of the reasons that I will advocate a true Patients' Bill of

Rights in the 2000 legislative session. The measure includes the following provisions:

- Provide citizens with the freedom to get a fair and objective second opinion without insurance companies interfering.
- Establish a grievance process requiring insurance carriers to quickly review consumer complaints.
- Require those making coverage decisions to be licensed medical doctors, rather than a behind-the-desk accountant.
- Protect patient privacy by preventing insurance companies from selling enrollees' personal information.

TOWN HALL!

Saturday, February 19th

with

*Gigi Talcott
& Mike Carrell*

University Place Library
3605 Bridgeport Way, Univ. Place
12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

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